

raised and donated money for the victims of the Tohoku earthquake, the tsunami in Japan, Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, and contributed to multiple cancer research foundations.

I have certainly seen his generosity as he has shared in ways that demonstrate his compassion, his care. His influence on the fishing community is really clear from the outpouring of love and support that he has received since he was diagnosed with an atypical form of Parkinson's.

In September of 2019, four of the captains from the TV show the "Deadliest Catch"—all of whom considered Chuck a mentor, a friend, and, really, an inspiration—co-hosted what they called Captains for a CURE fundraiser. It was an auction for the northwest chapter of the American Parkinson's Disease Association. They raised nearly \$380,000 at the event, and this money goes towards a Parkinson's disease research grant in Chuck's honor—again, trying to shine a light on the specific form of disease that Chuck lived with.

I received a note from Joe Bundrant on Sunday, when Chuck Bundrant passed from this Earth, and I wanted to share just a couple sentences from a personal email. He says:

Dying is not easy, but Chuck was up to the task and faced death on this earth as he faced rogue waves in Alaska: head-on with dignity, determination and with the faith that he would be safe in God's hands.

He goes on further to say that "he lived each day fully, driven by the values of integrity, loyalty, hard work and most importantly faith."

And so as I have reflected on the life of, really, an extraordinary man, it strikes me that, at the end of the day, this individual, Chuck Bundrant, was a family man, cared for his family deeply; but he, at the base of it, was a fisherman. And he lived his life in a way that really speaks to the values of integrity; loyalty; hard work; and, most importantly, faith.

To his family, to his wife Diane: Know that our hearts are with you. We thank you for sharing a truly honorable man with so many of us.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

HONORING OFFICER RYAN HAYWORTH

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, this weekend, thousands of law enforcement officers and their families came to our Nation's Capital to celebrate Police Weekend. And while Americans were paying tribute to our men and women in blue here in DC, North Carolina, once again, received the tragic news of a brave officer lost in the line of duty.

Officer Ryan Hayworth was only 23 years old. He had a bright and promising future ahead of him. He tragically lost his life on Sunday night, just 3 months after joining the Knightdale Police Department.

He and his training officer were investigating a single-vehicle incident on Interstate 540 when a drunk driver crashed into their parked SUV, taking Officer Hayworth's life.

Cody Hagler—his training officer—was seriously injured and remains hospitalized; but, thankfully, he is expected to recover.

This senseless tragedy is another reminder of the constant dangers our brave men and women in law enforcement face every single day. A routine call to respond to an accident resulted in a young officer losing his life in the line of duty.

Although he was only 23 years old, Officer Hayworth already had a distinguished record of service. He served in the U.S. Army, and then in the National Guard. And then he answered the call once again by becoming a police officer.

It is not surprising to anyone who knows the Hayworth family, though. Officer Hayworth's father was a long-time chief of the Zebulon Police Department, and his brother is a firefighter.

A member of his family church told a local news outlet:

He wanted to be a police officer like his dad. They're good, God-fearing people. They care about the community and it's sad something this tragic happened the way it did.

Knightdale Police Chief Lawrence Capps has noted the high standards Officer Hayworth met and exceeded as a new member of the force.

Police Chief Capps said:

When we hire police officers, we are looking for individuals that embody the best of this profession—all that is good, all that is wholesome, all that is pure, all that is righteous, and Ryan embodied those things.

It is no surprise to see the outpouring of support to honor Officer Hayworth. People from across the State have stopped by the Knightdale Police Department to place flowers at a memorial created by his colleagues. Other local police departments are now assisting the Knightdale Police Department in their patrols during this difficult time.

I am grateful that the vast majority of North Carolinians truly appreciate the service and the sacrifice of law enforcement. They recognize the men and women serving are good people who put their uniforms on every day and take extraordinary risks to protect others.

Officer Hayworth is an officer who took those risks to protect others, and he made the ultimate sacrifice in doing so. I know the community of Knightdale will never forget his service and sacrifice. And I know that all North Carolinians join me in keeping Officer Hayworth's loving family and his many friends and colleagues in our prayers.

May God bless Officer Ryan Hayworth and all of our Nation's brave law enforcement officers.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in supporting S. 2747, the Freedom to Vote Act; and S. 4, the John Lewis Voting

Rights Advancement Act; and S. 2615, the Right to Vote Act.

As some States and political operatives around the country seek to roll back voter protection laws and gerrymander voting districts, Congress must act to strengthen the freedom to vote and ensure elections are safe and accessible.

Since its original passage in 1965, the Voting Rights Act safeguarded the rights of historically marginalized voters at the polls.

Sadly, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted key Voting Rights Act protections. Earlier this year, in July 2021, the Supreme Court issued another split ruling further weakening the law in its decision in *Brnovich v. DNC*, making it more difficult to challenge discriminatory voting laws under section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

Over the years, this democracy has seen a crisis in access to the polls, and it has been worsened recently as Republican-led State legislatures have implemented policies that disproportionately suppress the voting rights of people of color, the elderly, college students, and those living in rural areas, among others. Those same political operatives have repeatedly weaponized false claims of election fraud, like those perpetuated by former President Trump, to try to overturn the will of the people.

The right to vote is a fundamental right guaranteed by our Constitution and our desired responsibility to protect it. In the United States of America, a beacon of democracy, our elections must be open and transparent and follow a process and procedure that all Americans can trust. It is more important than ever for Congress to affirm that voters have a right to free and fair elections.

The Freedom to Vote Act fulfills this constitutional responsibility by improving access to the ballot, advancing commonsense election integrity reforms, and protecting our democracy from emerging threats from cyber attacks to misinformation bots. It is not the job of government to make it hard to vote; rather, it is our responsibility to balance the convenience of voters with the security of their ballots. This legislation does just that.

I also support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which will repair the damage done by the Supreme Court's decisions by restoring the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division's oversight over historically discriminatory States when they change voting laws and legislative districts.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would provide needed Federal oversight and serve as a check on communities that have engaged in a pattern of restricting voting rights and making it harder for minority voters to be counted.

Finally, I support the Right to Vote Act, which would establish the first-

ever statutory right to vote in Federal elections, therefore allowing Americans to enforce that right by challenging in court any policy that restricts ballot access.

This legislation takes an enshrined right and empowers the people with the tools to defend it. This way, States attempting to restrict voting access will have to meet a high bar to justify any policy that makes it harder for U.S. citizens to participate in Federal elections.

Restricting the ability of Americans to freely and fairly cast their ballots threatens the very core of our Nation's founding democratic principles.

As Americans deal with the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and prepare for elections in the coming months and years, we should be removing—not adding—unnecessary barriers to voting.

While efforts to pass voting rights legislation have been stymied by Senate Republicans, you can be assured that I will continue to stand ready and willing to work with my colleagues in Congress to defend Americans' right to vote, end partisan gerrymandering, and prevent voter suppression.

The vote today will allow us to begin a much-needed debate on the topic of voting rights. I ask my Republican colleagues to come to the table and join us in this conversation about how we can protect our elections and safeguard American democracy.

I urge all my colleagues to support these important bills that would protect and advance voting rights in our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2842

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, our Armed Forces have been asked to work miracles over the last 18 months, and they have performed. During a global pandemic, in the face of natural disasters, facing dangerous missions, our men and women in uniform have risen dutifully, faithfully to the challenge. Many of our servicemembers have contracted—and then recovered from—COVID-19 over the last 18 months. Now these same heroes are being placed in a corner by this administration.

President Biden's COVID-19 vaccine requirement for the Armed Forces does not grant our soldiers, sailors, and marines the respect they deserve, and it could pose a challenge to recruitment and even to military readiness.

This mandate, tied with President Biden's more sweeping general vaccine mandate, has put millions of Americans in difficult positions. In most cases, these are just everyday Americans. They are mothers and fathers,

husbands and wives just trying to put food on the table during what has, for many, been a difficult time.

These still unwritten but very much efficacious mandates are forcing millions of our fellow citizens into a sort of second-class, unemployable status, placing countless of our neighbors on the economic and social fringes of our society.

I have heard from almost 300 Utahans in recent days who were worried about losing their jobs due to the mandates. Some of these individuals are heroic members of our military. These servicemembers were rightly praised for serving during a pandemic and for dangerous missions, but now are being forced out, possibly with limited or no retirement benefits because of the President's mandate.

Let me just share with you a few of their stories. One soldier who reached out to me recently has served for 10 years in the military. He never received a single reprimand, whether written or verbal. He honorably and proudly served his Nation. He has been informed, despite his years of successful Active-Duty service, that he will not receive an honorable discharge if he doesn't comply with the vaccine requirement. Accordingly, he asked to resign from the military. His commanders made clear that he would be barred from resignation. Then he sought a personal religious exemption. He was summarily told that his exemption request would be denied.

Of his situation, he said:

To be backed into a corner with two very bad options is both disheartening and sad, especially with what I have sacrificed and what my family has sacrificed on behalf of the military.

Another soldier told me his story. He has been in the Army for 18 years. All along, he was planning on retiring upon reaching two decades of service. He is about 18 months shy of reaching that point—just 18 months from that retirement point that he has been working toward for nearly two decades. Now, because of the vaccine mandate, he is at risk of losing his benefits and not receiving an honorable discharge.

Regarding his situation, he said:

This will cause a substantial loss in pay and quality of life for myself and a large number of others I know.

A third soldier reached out to my office in a similar retirement situation. This soldier has children who experienced complications with receiving the vaccine. The soldier also has a child with significant learning disabilities, whom he is worried about providing for.

He said:

This really could be a life-changing event for my family, and I feel strongly enough about it that I will risk all my benefits not to take [the vaccine]. I just wish I had a choice.

Now, these stories just barely scratch the surface of the hundreds of stories that I have heard from people across my State, including many who are

servicemembers. These people, like millions of other Americans, deserve a better option. They have earned that. That is why, today, I am asking that the Senate pass my Respecting our Servicemembers Act. This bill would simply prohibit the Secretary of Defense from requiring COVID-19 vaccination for our military. I am grateful to my colleagues Senators BRAUN and TUBERVILLE for joining me as cosponsors.

This is now the seventh time I have come to the Senate floor, asking that the Federal Government take a more temperate, reasoned approach. As I have said each time before, I am not anti-vaccine. In fact, I believe the development of the COVID-19 vaccine is a miracle. I have been vaccinated, and I have encouraged every member of my family to be vaccinated, and they have done so. I think the vaccine is a good thing. These mandates are simply the wrong way of getting it done.

Look, when we look at the employer vaccine mandate generally, the President doesn't have the authority. In fact, the Federal Government doesn't have that authority. This is not a power that belongs to the Federal Government to begin with. You know, even if it did, we haven't authorized the President to do this unilaterally. Even if we had or even if we were now considering a measure that would give him that authority, it is worth noting here that there are so many other better, more reasoned ways to encourage vaccination.

That is why I am here today, and that is why I will be back for as long as it takes to address these mandates, which are causing pain and suffering to hard-working moms and dads who don't want to have to be making a gut-wrenching choice between, on the one hand, receiving medical treatment that they don't want, whether for religious reasons or a health-related reason related to what their doctors have advised them or some other compelling personal reason or otherwise—they shouldn't have to choose between receiving medical treatment they don't want and forfeiting their ability to put bread on the table for their children. It is un-American, it is unfair, and it is immoral.

So, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of S. 2842 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, in reserving my right to object, on August 24, the Secretary of Defense determined that the mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 was necessary to

protect the force and defend the American people.

Vaccination is not mandatory for any servicemember who has a legitimate medical or religious reason for not being vaccinated.

Mandatory vaccinations are limited to only FDA-approved vaccines. All FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines have been determined to be safe and effective.

According to press reports, as of October 4, Active-Duty vaccination rates are as follows: the Army, 81 percent; the Navy, 90 percent; the Air Force, 80.9 percent; and the Marine Corps, 76.5 percent.

Mandatory vaccination is not a new issue for military personnel. Mandatory vaccinations for critical illnesses are mission critical, and requiring vaccination is almost as old as the military itself. I can personally verify that point. Indeed, servicemembers are currently required to get 17 different vaccinations when they enter the military or before deploying overseas, including for measles, mumps, diphtheria, hepatitis, smallpox, and the flu.

We need a healthy and ready force. We saw what happened when Navy ships were contaminated with COVID. They weren't ready to deploy. They couldn't deploy. They were tied up. Their effectiveness and ability to defend the country were marginalized, to say the least. I think this is absolutely incongruent with the practice and mission of the military.

One other thing I would say is that one of the most fundamental ethics of the military is that every soldier, sailor, marine, airman, and guardian is prepared to sacrifice for their fellow servicemember, and the idea that one would put their own personal feelings ahead of the potential for contaminating or sickening another servicemember and affecting the unit is something that I don't think squares with the ethic of the U.S. military or the effectiveness of the force.

I agree with the Secretary of Defense; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Mr. President. I would ask the quorum call be vitiated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is not in a quorum call.

Mr. BENNET. For once, the Senate is not in a quorum call. It is amazing. We are having an actual debate. I can't believe it. It has been so long since that has been true.

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am here to talk about voting rights today, and I actually am delighted that you are in the Chair, my colleague from Colorado, because over many years you have had so much to do with the fact that Colorado has the second-highest turnout of any State in the country—76 percent—because of what we have done,

Republicans and Democrats and unaffiliated voters working together, to make sure that Coloradans can cast their ballots.

I am tired, as I am sure you are, of hearing our colleague from Minnesota come down here, Senator KLOBUCHAR, and say that Minnesota is No. 1 in voting, which they are. They have more than 76 percent of the people that vote, but I think we will catch them, and maybe we will catch them this year.

But the reason why we have such a high turnout is because of things that we have put in place working in a bipartisan way. And when the Presiding Officer was the Governor of Colorado, you know, that was when, really, we moved to the mail-in ballot system that we have, completely fraud free and a delight, especially for people living in rural areas, where it is hard to get to the ballot box sometimes.

And so thank you for helping create a model for the country as we debate this bill in front of us. In fact, much of what this bill does—I will get to the bill in a minute—is reflective of the work that we have done in Colorado.

Mr. President, you came here during a difficult time, I would say, for our democracy. This has been, in many ways, a near-death experience for the U.S. democracy. There are countries all over the world that are totalitarian societies who are counting on our country to fail. They tell us at the negotiating table every time we sit down with them that they think we are going to fail; that democracy isn't up to the challenges of the 21st century; that it doesn't move fast enough. This place doesn't move at all many weeks and could give a person reason to wonder whether or not we are going to make it work.

But in this year, we had a particularly savage experience on January 6, when the Capitol was invaded by our own citizens, and we were escorted off the floor of the Senate, taken to a secure facility, where I watched and the Presiding Officer watched what everybody in America saw, what everybody in the world saw, which were thousands of people streaming into this Capitol to try to stop the counting of the vote at the urging of then-President Trump.

And, fortunately, because there were enough people in this body who wanted to confirm the vote, on January 20, we actually had a peaceful transfer of power, and Joe Biden became the President of the United States.

Most countries that have a January 6 never survive to January 20, you know. And when I was a kid, it was common to see these kinds of things happen in other capitals around the world, places like Tehran. You never would have imagined it would happen here in Washington, DC.

And now it has happened here in Washington, DC. But the big difference is that because more people turned out to vote than at any time in our country's history, we had that peaceful transfer of power.

And now the question for all of us, I think, as Americans, is, What are we going to do with the gift that our fellow citizens have given us by turning out to vote in the midst of a pandemic in record number? What are we going to do with that gift they have given to us—a gift of democracy, I would say, a new lease on life.

And I think we have got a moral obligation to them and to our Nation's children and, frankly, to humanity to make sure that this democracy actually works for the American people and not for the special interests that have worked so hard to corrupt it.

And there are so many ways before January 6 that our democracy was being attacked: partisan gerrymandering all over the country to allow politicians to pick their voters rather than have voters pick their politicians. That is an incredibly undemocratic thing for us to be doing across the country; the special interests that lobby this place who are basically unregulated by any campaign finance laws; the effect of Citizens United, which was the Supreme Court's decision that opened the floodgates of billionaires funding American elections instead of people funding American elections; and now, perhaps most egregiously, because it is so strategic and it is so purposeful, the attack on the vote all over the United States of America.

I find it hard to believe. I am 54 years—56. That is the saddest story I have ever told. I am 56 years old, Mr. President. As you know, I went to college in the 1980s, you know, and now I am seeing laws passed that I read about in the 1980s that passed in the 1960s to try to deny people the right to vote all over the country, to make it harder to vote.

Just this year, 19 States have passed 33 laws undermining democracy; laws to make it harder to vote early or vote by mail, two things we treasure in the State of Colorado; laws to slash the number of drop boxes or put them in really inconvenient places so people can't vote, as I do every single election with a drop box just a few blocks from my house. It takes me 30 seconds to vote, completely fraud free. Everyone in America should have the benefit of that.

We have got a law that made it a crime in Georgia to give people water while they are waiting in line to vote.

So I know there is a tendency around this place sometimes to just think that our democracy, just because it has always been here, that it is always going to be around, to assume that we can coast on the blood and the sweat and the tears of Americans who came before us, who fought generation after generation after generation to make this country more democratic, more fair, and more free. This is not a time for coasting. This is a time for us to deal with the profound threat that is stealing the right of Americans all over this country to vote, to have their